

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,  
425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20024,

Plaintiff,

v.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001,

Defendant.

Civil Action No.

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. brings this action against Defendant United States Department of Justice to compel compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (“FOIA”). As grounds therefor, Plaintiff alleges as follows:

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

1. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
2. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e).

**PARTIES**

3. Plaintiff is a non-profit, educational foundation organized under the laws of the District of Columbia and having its principal place of business at 425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20024. Plaintiff seeks to promote integrity, transparency, and accountability in government and fidelity to the rule of law. In furtherance of its public interest

mission, Plaintiff regularly requests access to the public records of federal, state, and local government agencies, entities, and offices, and disseminates its findings to the public.

4. Defendant is an agency of the U.S. Government and is headquartered at 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001. Defendant has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access.

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

#### **I.**

##### **May 24, 2012 Request**

5. On May 24, 2012, Plaintiff sent a FOIA request to the Civil Rights Division, a component of Defendant, by certified mail, return receipt requested, seeking access to the following:

1. Any and all records of communications between any official or employee of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and any officer, employee or representative of New England United for Justice (NEU4J), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and/or Demos, regarding, concerning, or related to the implementation and enforcement of the National Voter Registration Act in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
2. Any and all records of communications between any official of the Department of Justice and Ms. Maude Hurd, the President of New England United for Justice.

The time frame of the request was identified as being "January 1, 2011 through the present," meaning through May 24, 2012.

6. By letter dated May 29, 2012, the Civil Rights Division acknowledged receiving Plaintiff's FOIA request on May 24, 2012 and assigned the request tracking number 12-00323-F.

7. Defendant was required to determine whether to comply with Plaintiff's request within 20 days, excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A). Pursuant to this same provision, Defendant also was required to notify Plaintiff immediately of the determination, the reasons therefor, and the right to appeal any adverse determination to the head of the agency. Excluding intervening weekends and holidays, Defendant was required to make its determination and provide Plaintiff with the requisite notifications by June 21, 2013, at the latest.

## II.

### August 10, 2012 Request

8. On August 20, 2012, Plaintiff sent a FOIA request to the Civil Rights Division by certified mail, return receipt requested, seeking access to the following:

1. Any and all records of communications between any official or employee of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and any officer, employee or representative of New England United for Justice (NEU4J), Demos, and/or Project Vote regarding, concerning, or related to voter registration in Massachusetts.

The time frame of the request was identified as being "January 1, 2011 through the present," meaning through August 10, 2012.

9. By letter dated August 21, 2012, the Civil Rights Division acknowledged receiving Plaintiff's FOIA request on August 21, 2012 and assigned the request tracking number 12-00477-F.

10. Defendant was required to determine whether to comply with Plaintiff's request within 20 days, excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A). Pursuant to this same provision, Defendant also was required to notify Plaintiff immediately of the determination, the reasons therefor, and the right to appeal any adverse

determination to the head of the agency. Excluding intervening weekends and holidays, Defendant was required to make its determination and provide Plaintiff with the requisite notifications by September 19, 2013, at the latest.

### **III.**

11. As of the date of this Complaint, Defendant has failed to make a determination about whether it will comply with Plaintiff's requests, notify Plaintiff of any determination, or notify Plaintiff of his right to appeal any adverse determination to the head of the agency. Nor has Defendant produced any records responsive to the requests, indicated when any responsive records will be produced, or demonstrated that responsive records are exempt from production.

12. Because Defendant failed to comply with the time limit set forth in 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A), Plaintiff is deemed to have exhausted any and all administrative remedies with respect to its FOIA requests, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(C).

### **COUNT 1 (Violation of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552)**

13. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 12 as if fully stated herein.

14. Defendant is unlawfully withholding records requested by Plaintiff pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552.

15. Plaintiff is being irreparably harmed by reason of Defendant's unlawful withholding of requested records, and Plaintiff will continue to be irreparably harmed unless Defendant is compelled to conform its conduct to the requirements of the law.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court: (1) order Defendant to conduct a search for any and all responsive records to Plaintiff's FOIA requests and demonstrate that it employed search methods reasonably likely to lead to the discovery of records responsive to the requests; (2) order Defendant to produce, by a date certain, any and all non-exempt records

responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA requests and a *Vaughn* index of any responsive records withheld under claim of exemption; (3) enjoin Defendant from continuing to withhold any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA requests; (4) grant Plaintiff an award of attorneys' fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(E); and (5) grant Plaintiff such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: March 27, 2013

Respectfully submitted,

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.

/s/ Paul J. Orfanedes  
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*Attorneys for Plaintiff*